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UNHCR@50: FROM RESPONSE TO SOLUTIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. Fifty years is an important milestone for an organization such as UNHCR, especially when it coincides with the beginning of a new millennium. It warrants a pause for reflection. Why has the refugee problem -- which at the inception of UNHCR was considered temporary and regional -- become both persistent and global? What events have compelled millions to become uprooted during these past decades? How have these events shaped the work of the Office? How has it responded to new demands as they arose? And what of the future? What are the essential challenges as we pass into the twenty-first century, with its uncharted terrain? How best can UNHCR fulfil the role entrusted to it by the international community to meet the needs for international protection, assistance and solutions of the refugees and others of its concern?

2. This Millennium Annual Theme paper provides a framework for this reflection. Part I retraces some of the main challenges of the past in a roughly chronological order. It portrays with broad brush strokes the essential elements of the response of the international community to the refugee problem. Part II gives an overview of some of the current dilemmas, identifying elements for solutions.

I. THE RESPONSE

1950s - Europe

3. To understand the extent and nature of changes that have occurred in the work of UNHCR over the past 50 years, it is important to consider the circumstances of its creation. The scars of World War II were only beginning to heal, not least those caused by massive population displacements. In the face of considerable difficulties and cost, the international community had already been involved in massive repatriation and resettlement operations.

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And still there remained the lingering problem of refugees in camps in Europe awaiting permanent solutions.

4. As the Cold War between the East and West became entrenched, so came the recognition by a growing number of States of the need for a new United Nations refugee body. Negotiations leading to the adoption of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees were well advanced. UNHCR's task, as defined in its Statute[1], would be to provide international protection for refugees and seek permanent solutions to their problem by assisting governments to facilitate their voluntary repatriation or their assimilation within new national communities. However, the means put at its disposal were extremely limited: an initial life-span of three years and a small budget, mainly financed from voluntary contributions.

5. The Hungarian crisis in 1956 engendering a swift and massive exodus of some 200,000 refugees, mainly into Austria, was UNHCR's first major emergency. Setting the pattern for many more emergencies that would follow in the decades ahead, both relief assistance and longer-term solutions were called for.

6. Two important features characterized UNHCR's response to these needs. First, it worked with governments -- including particularly the Governments of Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia -- cutting through political divides to find solutions. Second, it worked closely with other key actors such as the ICRC (in Hungary), the League of Red Cross Societies (in Austria) and a range of voluntary agencies highlighting the need for partnerships. Many of the refugees were resettled rapidly in 35 countries across the globe. A smaller number chose to repatriate. These results earned UNHCR credibility, while demonstrating the need for an international body specifically responsible for refugees. In 1957, the General Assembly recognized that the refugee problem was global, authorized the establishment of an emergency fund, and decided on the creation of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's programme[2].

1960s - Beyond Europe

7. In the decade that followed, the span of UNHCR's activities reached well beyond Europe. As precursor to this shift of focus, the High Commissioner had already been called upon by the General Assembly[3] to assist Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, followed by a similar request on behalf of Algerian refugees in Morocco and Tunisia[4]. But it was in countries of sub-Saharan Africa that its action was mainly to extend in a series of refugee crises, frequently linked to the painful process of decolonization. By the end of the 1960s, some two-thirds of UNHCR's programme funds were being spent in Africa.

8. The largest groups affected by the struggle for independence were those from Portuguese territories (Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau) who fled repression and bloodshed by escaping into neighbouring countries. For these, as for other victims of the bitter fight for freedom, UNHCR provided material assistance and supported the generous hospitality provided by so many African

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[1] General Assembly resolution A/RES/428 (V) Annex
[2] General Assembly resolution A/RES/1166 (XII)
[3] General Assembly resolution A/RES/1167 (XII)
[4] General Assembly resolution A/RES/1286 (XIII)

States, while awaiting the opportunity to return to their homes. For many this came once independence was secured, in some cases after a few years. Other situations yielded less positive results. In the Great Lakes, brutal conflicts in Burundi and even more acutely in Rwanda, led to waves of displacement for which no durable solutions were found. This failure no doubt contributed to the genocide that was to occur three decades later.

9. Faced with the broadening of its activities, a major aspect of UNHCR's response was to expand the international protection regime. The Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1967, achieved this by removing the temporal restrictions of the 1951 Convention. The Protocol was opened for acceptance also by States which had not so far ratified the 1951 Convention. The adoption in 1969 of the OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa was another decisive step. It served as an essential regional complement, with the refugee definition and other key provisions attuned to a regional perspective of the refugee problem and setting invaluable standards for other parts of the world.

1970s - Expansion of activities

10. The early 1970s witnessed yet another extension of UNHCR's activities, this time into Asia, yielding new experience and new lessons to be learned. Fleeing the conflict between India and Pakistan, 10 million people entered India in 1971 from what was then East Pakistan. Shortly afterwards, UNHCR was called upon to assist with a massive repatriation operation that enabled the vast majority to return to what had become the independent State of Bangladesh. Some time later, in 1973-74, UNHCR was again at work organising an airlift of displaced persons between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

11. Difficult and challenging though they were, these operations gave UNHCR invaluable experience. For the first time, the Office was designated as "Focal Point" by the Secretary-General for the coordination of all United Nations assistance to refugees from Bangladesh in India. A Standing Inter-Agency Consultative Unit was established to facilitate communication. The massive relief operation, in a highly politicized environment, exposed the Office to problems that were to reoccur with depressing regularity in the years ahead: sudden and massive movements; difficulties in procurement and delivery of food and other basic supplies; the ravages of disease in crowded, inadequate camps; not to mention the onerous responsibility as focal point, later to be called "lead agency".

12. The flight from countries in Indochina following the communist victories in Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos in 1975 was yet another turning point for UNHCR. It led to a protracted engagement both with countries of the region and with Western countries of resettlement in a long and difficult search for solutions. Of the many milestones marking this engagement, one of the most important was the International Conference on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South East Asia, held in 1979 in Geneva. It came at a time when the world was following with grave concern the plight of Vietnamese fleeing their country in flimsy boats, confronting the perils of the sea and pirates, only to be pushed back as they reached the shores of neighbouring countries. A three-way agreement emerged from the Conference: ASEAN countries promised to provide temporary asylum; Viet Nam undertook to promote orderly departures in place of illegal exits; third countries agreed to accelerate the rate of resettlement. Some worries were voiced at the time concerning certain

aspects of this arrangement. Yet it was a positive example of international solidarity and burden-sharing -- a concept that has underpinned UNHCR's response and that of the international community over the years.

1980s - Crises in three continents

13. In the 1980s, a series of conflicts fuelled to a large degree by Cold War tensions caused extensive refugee crises, which occurred simultaneously across three continents. The involvement of the superpowers added to the pressures placed upon UNHCR as it struggled to meet the new needs.

14. This was certainly the case in the Horn of Africa, where large-scale displacements were prompted by war and famine. The influx of Ethiopians into Sudan in 1984 was among the most harrowing. The hastily erected refugee camps could not offer adequate conditions and care, such as it was, came too late for many. In Afghanistan too, bitter conflicts led to massive arrivals of refugees into neighbouring countries -- Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran -- where they constituted the largest refugee population at the end of the decade. Efforts to assist them were hampered both by security problems and by uneven donor response to funding needs. In Central America, civil wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala also caused waves of displacement, mostly to Honduras, Mexico and the United States. As elsewhere, many of the refugees were accommodated in camps, and the problems entailed in providing them with protection and assistance were compounded by political constraints.

15. An increasing reluctance of States to grant the necessary protection within the agreed international framework became evident during the decade. The magnitude of the refugee problems around the world, the levels of national and regional insecurity they generated and an increasing reluctance by States to continue to meet what they viewed as the rising financial, political, environmental and social costs of maintaining large refugee populations, or receiving a continuous flow had a negative impact on the willingness of countries to provide asylum. The blurred distinction in countries not only in the North but increasingly in the South between refugees and other irregular migrants further eroded the consensus on the importance of asylum. This environment posed an enormous obstacle to the efforts of the international community to address refugee problems in a coherent manner. The legacy of the challenge of managing refugee and migratory movements in a way that upholds human rights and humanitarian principles, while addressing the legitimate concerns of States and receiving communities, is still with us.

16. In responding to major crises, UNHCR's programme inevitably grew considerably. From 2.8 million refugees worldwide in 1975, the refugee population had grown to nearly 15 million by the end of the 1980s, and its budget had increased from $76 million to more than $580 million. This was also the period when efforts began to increase its emergency response capacity, with the expansion of an emergency unit that was first created in 1980.

1990s - Post Cold War

17. While long-standing conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, remained unresolved, the end of the Cold War allowed for new opportunities for peace in many areas of the world. With the support of the United Nations, agreements were reached in Namibia, Central America, Cambodia and Mozambique. They led, in turn, to large-scale repatriation movements in which UNHCR played a major role.

18. In Namibia, as had been the case much earlier in Algeria and Bangladesh, UNHCR limited its assistance to immediate needs and withdrew promptly once satisfied that the return was completed and basic protection issues (such as amnesties for returnees and other legal questions) were resolved. By contrast, in Central America, Cambodia and Mozambique, it was actively involved in helping the returnees rebuild their war-torn countries and reintegrate into local communities learning to live peacefully alongside former foes. The means it employed for this purpose included the quick impact projects, first tried and tested successfully in Central America. These micro-projects often involved the rehabilitation of basic facilities such as clinics and schools. While the funding could be modest, their success hinged largely on active community involvement, with women playing an important role. Another important aspect of UNHCR's response was to cooperate with development agencies, as happened in Mozambique. Here UNHCR worked closely with UNDP and the World Bank designing complementary programmes. Despite many problems along the way, the essential objective -- that of ensuring sustainable return -- was largely met.

19. With the sudden dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, however, it became clear that there was a need to replicate regional approaches in Europe to address the outbreak of inter-ethnic conflict and nationalist and secessionist movements in the former Republics. A Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States (CIS Conference) was convened in 1996 by UNHCR, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Through its Programme of Action, a process of regional cooperation was launched to respond to the problems of up to nine million displaced persons in the former Soviet Union and the threat of future mass displacements. It provided a broad framework for UNHCR's activities in the region and offered scope for innovative responses, including the concept of "preventive protection". The problem of statelessness and unclear nationality status gained increased attention by the Office in this endeavour. Activities to reduce statelessness have become an essential means of making protection more effective.

A new generation of emergencies

20. The first major emergency relief operation in the post-Cold War era came as a result of the mass outflow of Kurds from northern Iraq following the Gulf War in early 1991. It was during this crisis that the concept of a "safe haven" was put into practice inside northern Iraq. UNHCR cooperated closely with coalition military forces, particularly as hundreds of thousands began returning to Iraq in mid-1991. At the same time, the Office assumed overall responsibility for protection and assistance to the returning

refugees. This experience proved to be an initial step in the opening of new channels of communication with the military.

21. Another major test for UNHCR during the decade was in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Following the genocide in Rwanda, over two million refugees amassed on border areas, generating shocking scenes of human suffering and death in the international media. The control of camps and settlements was largely in the hands of armed elements, confounding relief efforts. Generally poor conditions in the refugee hosting areas, epidemics and war increased the suffering and caused the death of thousands. After several years of stalemate, the spread of conflict in the region forced refugees to flee back into Rwanda and elsewhere in the region. Their reintegration is still ongoing.

22. Large-scale population movements in the Balkans region generated in the wake of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, resulted in a series of even more complex international relief operations, in which UNHCR was requested to assume the role of "lead agency". At the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia in July 1992, UNHCR put forward a Comprehensive Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in the former Yugoslavia. This became the basis for international action related to refugees and displaced persons from the region and led to countries in the region establishing "temporary protection" regimes.

23. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the first time in its history, UNHCR mounted a relief operation in the midst of an ongoing war to assist not only refugees, but also internally displaced and other war-affected populations. During the war, more than 80 per cent of the emergency relief supplies distributed to civilians were delivered by UNHCR. This entailed close cooperation with other United Nations agencies such as FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, as well as a multitude of international and local NGOs which operated under UNHCR's "umbrella". The Dayton Agreement signed at the end of 1995, emphasized the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes and called on UNHCR to develop a repatriation plan. Nevertheless, no provisions were made to enforce this. Despite the strenuous efforts to encourage reconciliation and facilitate voluntary returns, hundreds of thousands remained displaced and unable to return to their former homes. Refugees contemplating return to areas where their ethnic group was in the minority were among those unable to return. The aftermath of ethnic cleansing and the underlying political motivations have yet to be dealt with in a concerted and consistent manner.

24. Ethnic tensions in the Balkans came to a head again when conflict erupted in the province of Kosovo, leading to a mass outflow of Kosovo Albanians into surrounding countries and areas. The exodus quickly overwhelmed the response capacity of host governments and humanitarian organizations alike, including UNHCR. UNHCR accepted an offer by NATO to provide support in the humanitarian relief operation. The support of NATO was particularly critical in finding a solution for the large number of Kosovo Albanians stranded on the border with The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In addition to establishing new camps, a "humanitarian evacuation programme" was launched in close cooperation with IOM, whereby refugees were allowed to enter the country and then transferred to third countries. When the refugees began to return en masse several months later, it was to a region devastated by war. Homes were in ruins and the infrastructure so

damaged that it was inadequate to support them. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was entrusted with reestablishing social structures and law and order. UNHCR played an important role in establishing and undertaking activities under the Humanitarian Pillar of UNMIK. Despite these efforts, the flight of Serbs and other minority populations highlighted the difficulties of reintegrating communities torn apart by ethnic strife. Efforts to promote coexistence, let alone reconciliation, are still to bear fruit.

The continuing challenges

25. The proliferation and nature of conflicts during the 1990s resulted in an increased demand for rapid responses and solutions, sometimes at the expense of humanitarian and refugee protection principles. UNHCR and its partners were required to work simultaneously in countries of asylum and of return. The High Commissioner encouraged the international community to adopt broader, regionally based peace-building approaches to stop the spiral of conflict, poverty and human displacement. However, UNHCR was left all too often on its own to deal with problems which were essentially of a political nature. The gap between emergency relief and longer-term development and reconstruction activities continued to be very wide.

26. Throughout these crises, UNHCR was also confronted with the enormously difficult task of providing assistance in the midst of armed conflict and an exponential growth in the number of international actors involved in responding to humanitarian crises. Just "being there" became almost a necessity for many different actors. Humanitarian resources were increasingly used by governments directly or channelled through national NGOs. This diminished the ability of humanitarian agencies to operate and emphasized the need for improved coordination and enhanced partnerships. Nevertheless, new relationships were fostered with actors such as regional security organizations, multinational military forces, humanitarian and development organizations, war crimes investigators, peace negotiators, and the media.

27. Humanitarian staff found themselves frequently working in insecure situations, severely limiting their access to displaced populations and putting their own safety at risk. In addition, the civilian character of refugee camps and settlements were often compromised, particularly when refugee camps were placed close to borders. Lack of commitment to address the problem of militarization of camps within their territories also brought about worrying security threats to refugees and humanitarian workers alike. These are challenges UNHCR and the international community are still struggling to comes to grips with.

II. SOLUTIONS

28. In its fifty years of existence, UNHCR has helped millions of people to return to their homes, settle locally in their countries of asylum, or resettle in third countries. Yet the problem of the displaced and uprooted is far from solved. UNHCR is in the midst of responding to several current crises around the world, including in Chechnya (Russian Federation), the Horn of Africa, Sierra Leone, and Timor as well as continuously in Afghanistan. The new millennium has indeed begun without visible improvement in the well-

being and security of millions of new refugees, and it is likely that the situations will become even more complex in the years ahead. While there is hope that conventional conflicts between States may be on the wane, internal crises and secessionist tendencies may well continue to multiply, with many lingering unresolved for many years and liable to restart at any time. The solutions to problems such as these go far beyond the realm of purely humanitarian work. Yet, against this broader context, the various actors involved in bringing protection and assistance to refugees and the displaced can have an impact by working in tandem with all concerned in a number of key areas. Some of the most pertinent are identified below, with suggested elements for solutions.

Strengthening the institution of asylum

29. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which, with the 1967 Protocol, continues to be the bedrock of the international protection of refugees, was primarily drawn up in response to the mass displacement that followed World War II. As the century drew to a close, the institution of asylum was under assault, as countries faced growing numbers of asylum-seekers, mixed with uncontrolled flows of illegal immigrants. The response has been to restrict or refuse admission to their territory, combined with other deterring measures. In turn, many of those seeking asylum have been driven into the snares of traffickers and smugglers, increasing the suspicions held by large sectors of public opinion as to their motives. And the problems are not limited to the industrialized North. In the South too, the burden of hosting large numbers of refugees with limited assistance from the international community, combined with threats to their stability, has led some countries to show great reluctance to continue their tradition of hospitality to those in need of asylum. The problems are compounded still further when governments fail to cooperate in allowing their citizens to return.

30. With the growing complexity of population movements, there are no easy solutions. Together with the many partners in this field, UNHCR is pursuing a strategy with the following components:

- Maintain an open dialogue with States that acknowledges their legitimate concerns, while calling upon them to uphold their legal obligations under international legal instruments. Such a dialogue is of particular importance in the industrialized world, where standards in this field have an "export value". As agreed at the summit meeting of the European Union in Finland in October 1999, a common European asylum system is being developed as follow-up to the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam. UNHCR's involvement in this process will seek to ensure the "absolute respect of the right to seek asylum" that was reaffirmed at the summit.
- Assist countries (particularly those of Central and Eastern Europe) who are recent signatories to the Convention and Protocol, in developing or refining their asylum systems in order to ensure adequate standards of treatment for those seeking asylum.
- Encourage comprehensive approaches, notably at the regional level, to the issue of migration and population movements, such as the Pueblo Process in Central America, and other regional initiatives of a similar kind in Asia (through the APC consultations), Central Europe (as follow-up to the CIS Conference) and elsewhere.

- Enhance the capacity of first countries of asylum to extend adequate protection to refugees on their territory.
- Enhance the capacity of developing countries to receive back their citizens, by encouraging development and related initiatives in countries of origin, especially areas of return.
- Undertake global consultations involving States, host communities and the international community, aimed at revitalizing the protection regime, including by addressing gaps and inadequacies of the current system.

Building partnerships

31. Over the past decade, there has been an exponential growth in the number of humanitarian and other actors involved in responding to refugee crises. UNHCR has endeavoured to ensure that their responses were undertaken in a coordinated and mutually supportive manner. In some cases, the Office linked up with military forces, taking advantage of their logistical and communications expertise and equipment in situations where refugees arrived in areas which were remote and difficult to gain access. In other cases, UNHCR entered into cooperative arrangements with the private sector. Often the staff of private sector organizations were the driving force behind initiatives to assist humanitarian operations. They were willing to contribute their expertise and brought innovative ideas and solutions to complex issues.

32. Civil society in many parts of the world has also played a key role in ensuring a coherent response to problems of displacement. The knowledge and grassroots experience of local populations can enhance humanitarian efforts. In addition, partnerships with national societies have helped to raise the consciousness of the global public to the needs of refugees and displaced persons and have generated new sources of support for the Office. Refugees themselves and their communities have also made substantial contributions to finding solutions to their plight. UNHCR has sought to take advantage of their special knowledge and skills to enhance the effectiveness of assistance and in the design and implementation of activities on their behalf. Their participation in peace-building processes has produced positive results.

33. UNHCR has long established partnerships with many organizations, including with other United Nations agencies. Cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has been particularly important in meeting the challenges of complex emergencies over the past years. There is room to elaborate these further and develop other new partnerships with corporations and civil society. This can be accomplished through a number of means, including the following:

- Strengthen UNHCR's relationship with national NGOs, including through the Partnership in Action (PARinAC) and Reach Out initiatives. This can enhance local responses to refugee issues and promote consistency in approaches.
- Develop and support national societies to raise awareness of UNHCR's work and the needs of displaced persons and support for UNHCR's work on their behalf. National societies have also proven effective in combating xenophobia and facilitating the integration of resettling refugees.
- Support UNHCR's effort to establish and develop relationships with private sector organizations and corporations. Globalization has produced a

significant shift in the economic balance of modern societies. The business sector, the media, private organizations and individuals have control over increasing amounts of resources. In addition, instantaneous access to information and the ability to communicate quickly to virtually anywhere in the world has opened up new possibilities for humanitarian responses. The private sector has been instrumental in harnessing these technologies and has expertise to shape them to suit the needs of refugees and the agencies that endeavour to assist them.

Increasing security

34. The changing nature of conflict has led in recent years to increasingly complex movements of civilians fleeing along with armed elements. In extreme situations, refugee populations have been held hostage in desperate attempts by former regimes and rebel groups to further their aims. In less difficult situations, it is recognized nevertheless that like other large, poor and densely-populated human settlements, refugee camps and populated areas are often prone to insecurity, especially when basic services are lacking and no resolution to the situation is in sight. UNHCR and its partners frequently find themselves operating in these types of insecure situations. While it is clear that host States have primary responsibility for the physical protection of refugees and ensuring the humanitarian and civilian character of camps and settlements, some have been unwilling or unable to uphold this responsibility. As a result, refugee security and staff security have become closely intertwined.

35. UNHCR has proposed several means of addressing this critical and complex issue. They include the following:

- Enhance cooperation between States to ensure that sufficient resources are available to host countries to allow them to uphold their responsibilities in maintaining security. This includes the provision of advice, training, technical assistance and funds in a spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing.
- Undertake preventive action through the rapid deployment of law and order and public security personnel. Stand-by arrangements to deploy such staff along with UNHCR emergency teams need to be established with governments. These officers would work closely with host governments and be allowed unhindered access to refugee hosting areas.
- Strengthen the capacity of the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations and the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator to respond to situations in which refugee populations are put at risk. Improving their capacity to analyse and respond to realities on the ground can improve UNHCR's efforts to assist populations.
- Support for UNHCR's efforts to reinforce its emergency preparedness and response capacity, including through the strengthening of training and communication networks.
- Support for the development of a protocol to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel to extend its scope of legal protection to all United Nations and associate personnel, including locally recruited staff.

Linking humanitarian assistance and longer-term development

36. Experience gained, particularly in the past two decades, has illustrated the need to see beyond immediate assistance to longer-term needs. This need is particularly acute in situations of return to countries devastated by conflict and bloodshed. UNHCR has been involved in a number of repatriation operations, each with different circumstances and challenges. But one feature was common to all: the keen desire shown by the vast majority of those having suffered displacement to be able to return home as swiftly as possible. To be sustainable, however, the return must be accompanied by measures to help rebuild shattered infrastructure and rekindle the economic life of the community.

37. Similarly, countries hosting large refugee populations over protracted periods of time suffer longer-term economic and social prejudice which, if ignored, can spark off resentment, even instability.

38. The solutions proposed to close the "gap" between humanitarian assistance and longer-term development again involves a wide range of partners, combining their efforts to:

- Develop strategies with a regional dimension, such as used at the 1989 International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA), which successfully linked reintegration to national development programmes. A more recent example, deserving active support from all concerned is the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe, adopted by the European Union, participating countries and other supporting governments, international organizations and agencies in 1999, with the aim of fostering peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity throughout the entire region.
- Encourage and support similar efforts elsewhere, such as in West Africa where UNHCR is involved along with international development agencies and regional bodies, designed to give a more significant role to civil society, to improve governance and to increase economic opportunities.
- Strengthen links between international agencies involved in humanitarian and development activities to overcome the institutional and funding disparities that impede the transition from relief to development. The example shown in the early 1990's in Mozambique, where the World Bank, UNDP and UNHCR worked side by side in helping refugees to reintegrate following their return home is evidence that it can be done. The "Brookings Process" involving a wider range of stakeholders, seeks to take this a step further by achieving a greater integration of planning and efforts making maximum use of resources and mechanisms already available. Having selected a number of pilot countries, the approach is currently being tested.
- Call upon States with such needs to adjust their own development agenda in order to make full use of mechanisms that now exist within the United Nations system: the Common Country Assessment and the Development Assistance Framework.

Promoting and building peace

39. Humanitarian action alone cannot resolve fundamental social, economic and political problems that can lead to or perpetuate problems of displacement. Yet that is not to say that humanitarian actors have no role to play in promoting and building peace, helping to remove at least some of

the root causes. UNHCR, through its activities on behalf of refugees and others of concern, promotes international efforts in prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building. In turn, United Nations peace operations lend a hand to UNHCR's endeavours to solve refugee problems.

40. Over the years UNHCR has been instrumental in peace negotiations. Already in Bangladesh and in Cyprus in the 1970's, it played a modest but important mediating role between opposing parties. In the early 1990's it was involved in extensive consultations in the process leading up to the Paris Peace Agreement for Cambodia, where repatriation was recognized as an essential element. More recently it advised on repatriation issues as the Dayton Peace Accords were established in 1997. The High Commissioner is also frequently called upon to give briefings at the Security Council on humanitarian issues that have a bearing on peacekeeping or peace-building.

41. As we enter the twenty-first century, the community of nations and other actors concerned need to combine their action in order to:

- Ensure that political decisions are made with full understanding of the underlying humanitarian concerns and possible consequences. Humanitarian aspects in conflict prevention and resolution need to be addressed at the outset of such efforts.
- Support efforts to limit the flow of arms, assist in demobilizing armed groups, and combat the forced conscription of children.
- Encourage and support action designed to bring to justice those responsible for perpetrating brutality and violating basic human rights, as a precondition for lasting reconciliation. This involves restoring and building up national judicial systems. It also means supporting the various war tribunals introduced by the United Nations in recent years, and hastening the creation of the proposed International Criminal Court.
- Support communities in their efforts to restore the complex web of relations destroyed by war and exile, recognizing the essential role that can be played by grassroots groups, notably women, in these efforts. Creative projects -- no matter how modest -- ranging from Peace Education programmes for children and adults of all ages, to small but concrete community-based coexistence projects, help to heal the scars of the past and rebuild a future together.

42. Humanitarian actors such as UNHCR have an important role in ensuring that solutions, particularly repatriation, are sustainable. There remains the challenge of helping shattered communities, once torn apart by hatred and brutality, to learn to live together again as the first step towards reconciliation. Efforts are already under way. Any vision of the twenty-first century must have peace-building as an essential component, combining the strengths of individuals, States and the community of nations towards this goal.